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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AMCITS Newsletter

Greetings from Ambassador Jacobson

Bonjour and Hello!

Greetings to the American community in Canada! Since I last wrote to you via the AMCITS newsletter, I have been getting to know Canada better. I have visited all 10 provinces - - and met all 10 premiers. Throughout my travels, the warmth and decency of everyone I have met has never failed to impress me. I have always felt like I am among family.



Undoubtedly one of the highlights of my time here in Canada has been going to the Olympic and Paralympics Games in Vancouver and Whistler. It was a privilege to meet fellow delegates to the opening and closing ceremonies like Vice President Biden and his family, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, and U.S. Olympians and Paraolympians like Peggy Fleming, Mike Eruzione, Kiritsti Yamaguchi and Manny Guerra Jr. The only way the Olympics could have been better would have been if the U.S. men's hockey team had scored the winning goal in the finals! However, it's hard not to feel good for the Canadians, who feel justifiably proud of running an excellent Olympics – not to mention winning more gold medals than any other Winter Olympics team ever!

In this edition of the AMCITS newsletter, you will find information on upcoming elections in the U.S., voting, taxes, and a caution about potential threats against Americans overseas. I know you find this information useful. I especially draw your attention to the item in this newsletter about communicating with the Embassy — by registering with us, by visiting our website, by signing up to follow us via Facebook and Twitter, and even by reading my blog!

Best wishes,

DJ

Appointments Now Required For American Citizen Services at U.S. Embassy in Ottawa

The U.S. Embassy in Ottawa has always prided itself on providing consular services to U.S. citizens in a prompt, efficient, and courteous manner. To ensure that we can continue efficient service, we have implemented an appointment system for applicants. Applicants for American Citizen Services (ACS) will now need appointments to receive ACS services, including applications for passports, consular reports of birth abroad, notariats, and other consular services for American citizens. This change will make visits to the Embassy smoother and will diminish waiting times.

Appointments are free and easy to make. To get an appointment, simply go to the website for American consular services in Canada at www.consular.canada.usembassy.gov. Scroll down to the button that says "Schedule Your Ottawa Passport Appointment Online." You will then be taken to a webpage that will allow you to make (or cancel) an appointment for an ACS service.

New Fees Proposed For Many Consular Services.

On February 9, 2010, the Department of State published a proposed rule in the Federal Register to change certain consular fees, including those related to U.S. passport and passport card applications, immigrant visas, and other services provided to U.S. and foreign citizens.

The proposed rule to change fees is based on a comprehensive cost of service study completed in June 2009. As demand for passports increased to an average of 15 million per year, the increase in certain fees will help cover actual operating expenses for the Department of State's 301 consular posts abroad, 23 domestic passport agencies, and other centers that provide consular services to both U.S. and foreign citizens. However, improvements in automated systems have also decreased some fees, such as the application fee for determining returning resident status.

Consular services include assistance to American citizens who are victims of crime abroad or citizens who require evacuation during natural disasters overseas, such as those in the recent earthquake in Haiti. The cost of providing such services in fiscal year 2009 was almost 300 million dollars.

The Department will inform the public when the fee changes go into effect. For more information, please see http://travel.state.gov/passport/get/fees/fees_4734.html.

Tax Corner

We'd like to remind you that for U.S. citizens and resident aliens, the rules for filing income, estate, and gift tax returns and paying estimated tax are generally the same whether you are in the U.S. or abroad. Your worldwide income is subject to U.S. income tax, regardless of where you reside.

When to File

If you reside overseas, or are in the military on duty outside the U.S., you are allowed an automatic 2-month extension to file your return until June 15. However, any tax due must be paid by the original return due date (April 15th) to avoid interest charges.

If you are unable to file your return by the due date, you can request an additional extension to October 15th by filing Form 4686 before the return due date. However, any payments made after June 15 would be subject to both interest charges and failure to pay penalties.

Where to File

If you are a U.S. citizen or resident alien, and you live in a foreign country, mail your tax return to:

Department of the Treasury
Internal Revenue Service Center
Austin, TX 733301



Exchange Rates

You must express the amounts you report on your U.S. tax return in U.S. dollars. The IRS has no official exchange rates, but accepts any exchange rate that is used consistently. Taxpayers usually use yearly average exchange rates to convert income that was received in foreign currency periodically throughout the year. Yearly average exchange rates can be found at <http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/international/article/0,,id=206089,00.html>.

How to Get Tax Help

Please note that the IRS does not have a tax assistance presence in Canada. However, the IRS office in Philadelphia provides international tax assistance Monday-Friday, 6:00 am to 11:00 pm, and can be contacted at 1-215-516-2000 (not toll free).

Military and Overseas Voters, Submit your Ballot Request for the May and June State Primaries!

The following States will hold Primary Elections during the months of May and June, 2010 on the dates indicated.

May 4, 2010: Indiana, North Carolina, Ohio

May 11, 2010: Nebraska, West Virginia

May 18, 2010: Arkansas, Kentucky, Oregon, Pennsylvania

May 25, 2010: Idaho

June 1, 2010: Alabama, Mississippi, New Mexico

June 8, 2010: California, Iowa, Maine, Montana, Nevada, New Jersey, North Dakota, South Carolina, South Dakota, Virginia

June 22, 2010: Utah

Register and Request Your Ballot Now!

All members of the U.S. Uniformed Services, their family members and citizens residing outside the U.S. who are residents from these States and have not yet submitted a registration and ballot request (FPCA) for the 2010 calendar year should do so as soon as possible.

The FPCA ballot application and instructions for the above States are available at www.fvap.gov/FPCA. Click on your State on the map and follow the instructions to register and request an absentee ballot. Some States allow submitting the FPCA by fax or email in addition to regular mail.

Send your **FPCA NOW** to your election office to ensure you have enough time to receive, vote, and return the ballot!

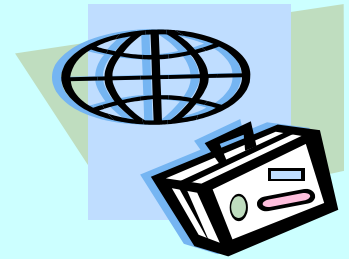
If you'd like more information on the Federal Voting Assistance Program or need help with the absentee voting process, please contact FVAP at www.fvap.gov, 1-800-438-8683, DSN (312) 425-1584, or at vote@fvap.ncr.gov. Toll-free phone numbers from 67 countries are listed at: www.fvap.gov/contact/tollfreephone.html. With your feedback, we can make this even more helpful for the next election.



Worldwide Caution

On February 12, 2010, the Department of State issued an updated Worldwide Caution to update information on the continuing threat of terrorist actions and violence against U.S. citizens and interests throughout the world. U.S. citizens are reminded to maintain a high level of vigilance and to take appropriate steps to increase their security awareness.

For the full text of the Worldwide Caution, please go to
http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/pa/pa_1161.html.



Before You Go, While You Are Abroad

U.S. citizens living or traveling abroad are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site to obtain updated information on travel and security. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. To register, please go to <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/index.aspx>

As the Department of State continues to develop information on any potential security threats to U.S. citizens overseas, it shares credible threat information through its Consular Information Program documents. In addition to information on the Internet, travelers may obtain up-to-date information on security conditions by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or, outside the United States and Canada on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm Monday through Friday, Eastern Time (except U.S. federal holidays.)

Communicating with the U.S. Embassy

Here at the U.S. Embassy, we want you to keep in touch. You can keep up with news and events in many different ways:

Our website: <http://ottawa.usembassy.gov/>

Consular information: <http://www.consular.canada.usembassy.gov/index.asp>

The Embassy's Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/canada.usembassy>

The Embassy's Twitter account: <http://twitter.com/USEmbassyottawa>

And last, but certainly not least, Ambassador Jacobson's Blog:

<http://blogs.ottawa.usembassy.gov/ambassador/>